

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CU-04 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03 NEA-10

NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 USIA-15 TRSE-00 MBFR-03

SAJ-01 ACDA-19 SS-15 NSC-10 VO-03 SCA-01 INSE-00

DODE-00 EB-11 COME-00 RSR-01 /144 W

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R 011447Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4851

INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMCONSUL MUNICH

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, CGEN, CZ

SUBJECT: INCREASING CZECHOSLOVAK TRAVEL TO THE WEST:

FIRST HALF OF 1973 IN PERSPECTIVE

REF: PRAGUE A-25 OF MARCH 2, 1973

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: WITH REGARD TO CSCE AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT ISSUE, AMEMB PRAGUE VISITORS VISA ISSUANCE TO CZECHOSLOVAK CITIZENS FOR FIRST HALF OF 1973 SHOWS SIGNIFICANT INCREASE AS DO VISA ISSUANCES TO CZECHOSLOVAKS BY OTHER WESTERN MISSIONS. PERCENTAGES OF TYPES OF US VISA RECIPIENTS, E.G., AGE GROUPS, REMAIN RELATIVELY STABLE COMPARED TO SAME PERIODS 1971 AND 1972. BOTH INCREASE AND VOLUME OF US VISA ISSUANCE AND THAT OF OTHER WESTERN MISSIONS HERE OFFER PROOF OF CONTINUATION OF RELAXATION OF TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED LATE 1969. END SUMMARY.

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2. WITH REGARD TO CSCE AND SECRETARY'S DISCUSSION OF FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITH CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERS, DEPARTMENT WILL BE INTERESTED TO LEARN THAT WE HAVE ISSUED 1030 VISITORS' VISAS TO CZECHOSLOVAK CITIZENS IN FIRST HALF OF 1973, AN INCREASE OF ALMOST 85 PERCENT AND 40 PERCENT OVER SAME PERIODS IN 1971 AND 1972 RESPECTIVELY (SEE REFAIR).

3. UNLIKE THAT INCREASED TOTAL OF VISAS ISSUED, HOWEVER, THE PERCENTAGES OF VISA RECIPIENTS IN ONE OR ANOTHER CATEGORY HAVE REMAINED RELATIVELY STABLE. FOR EXAMPLE, DURING FIRST SIX MONTHS 1971, 1972 AND 1973, THE PERCENTAGE OF BOTH THE EMPLOYED AND STUDENT VISA RECIPIENTS HAS VARIED BETWEEN 44 AND 40 PERCENT. THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN REMAINS AT ABOUT TWO PERCENT, OF TRANSIENTS AND VISITORS TO NON-FAMILY FRIENDS AT ABOUT SEVEN PERCENT. A DECLINE FROM 35 PERCENT TO 27 PERCENT OCCURRED AMONG RECIPIENTS UNDER AGE FIFTY.

4. US VISA RECIPIENTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA ARE GENERALLY RETIRED, OVER FIFTY AND TRAVELING TO VISIT IMMEDIATE RELATIVES. HOWEVER, THE EMPLOYED AND THE YOUNGER CONTINUE TO FORM A SUBSTANTIAL PERCENTAGE OF THE RECIPIENTS.

5. WESTERN MISSIONS HERE ARE ALSO EXPERIENCING SUBSTANTIAL INCREASES IN VISA ISSUANCE:

A. FRENCH HAVE ISSUED 13,000 VISAS (MAINLY TOURIST) IN FIRST HALF OF 1973 AND EXPECT TO GREATLY EXCEED CY 1972 TOTAL OF 18,000.

B. FRG TRADE MISSION NOW SWAMPED DURING PEAK SUMMER SEASON BY DAILY ISSUANCE OF ALMOST 500 VISAS FOR IMMEDIATE FAMILY VISITS. IN ADDITION, IT ISSUES DAILY TWO TO THREE HUNDRED TRANSIT VISAS, MANY OF WHICH ARE REQUESTED BECAUSE OF CZECH-AUSTRIAN BORDER CLOSING DUE HOOF AND MOUTH DISEASE.

C. BRITISH ESTIMATE 1973 VISA ISSUANCE UP 30 PERCENT OVER SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR, WHILE CANADIANS SAY CANADIAN ISSUANCE OF 800 VISITOR VISAS FIRST HALF OF 1973 IS UP LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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25 PERCENT OVER FIRST HALF OF 1972.

6. WE HAVE IMPRESSION THAT NUMBER OF CZECHOSLOVAK TOURISTS TO YUGOSLAVIA IS ALSO UP OVER LAST YEAR, ALTHOUGH NO FIGURES AVAILABLE.

7. SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE AND VOLUME OF VISA ISSUANCE REPORTED ABOVE SHOULD BE VIEWED IN RELATION TO

(A) THE FREE-TRAVEL PERIOD OF 1968-1969 WHEN ABOUT ONE
MILLION CZECHOSLOVAKS VISITED WEST, AND (B)
THE SUBSEQUENT CLAMPDOWN ON WESTWARD TRAVEL IN LATE 1969.
IT IS INTERESTING THAT ALTHOUGH CZECHOSLOVAK AUTHORITIES
HAVE BEEN RESTRICTING TRAVEL ABROAD BY RELATIVES OF EMIGRES,
TO ENTICE EMIGRES TO RETURN UNDER PRESENT AMNESTY,
OVERALL TRAVEL ABROAD IS NEVERTHELESS UP. FINALLY,
RESTRICTIONS ON EMIGRATION TO WEST, IN CONTRAST TO VISITORS
VISA SITUATION DESCRIBED ABOVE, SHOW NO SIGNIFICANT
CHANGE; IN FIRST SIX MONTHS 1973 WE ISSUED 24 IMMIGRANT
VISAS, COMPARED TO 32 FOR SAME PERIOD IN 1972.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973PRAGUE01826
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: PRAGUE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730865/aaaabvlg.tel
Line Count: 127
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 PRAGUE A-25 OF MARCH 2, 1973
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13-Aug-2001 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <14-Sep-2001 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INCREASING CZECHOSLOVAK TRAVEL TO THE WEST: FIRST HALF OF 1973 IN PERSPECTIVE
TAGS: PINS, PFOR, CGEN, CZ
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005